Students' feedback: An effective tool in teachers' evaluation system

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Abstract

Background: Evaluation is an integral part of medical education. Although there are various methods of teachers' evaluation, student's feedback is considered as the most effective and reliable method albeit a controversial one. In this study, we have tried to evaluate the effectiveness of the students' feedback in teachers' evaluation in an upcoming medical college. **Aim:** The aim of this study was to improve the quality of teaching by introducing students' feedback as a teachers' evaluation system in a new medical college. **Materials and Methods:** A feedback of second professional teachers was obtained from the fourth-semester students. This feedback was obtained through a proforma which was validated through peer review. Based on the feedback, teachers were informed about their strengths and weaknesses in a confidential manner. A uniform opportunity was then provided to these teachers for 3 months to improve their teaching skills. At the end of the period, again a questionnaire was administered to both the students and the teachers to assess the effectiveness of the feedback system. **Results:** More than two-third of the students and teachers alike agreed that the student's feedback is an effective tool for the faculty development. Majority of the teachers were satisfied with the present format of the feedback system and agreed that it sensitized them toward the students need. **Conclusions:** Student's feedback is an effective tool for teachers' evaluation resulting in faculty development. However, other sources of feedback may also be utilized for the overall assessment of a teacher.

Key words: Students feedback, teachers' evaluation, teaching and learning

Introduction

Evaluation is an integral part of the medical education. Teachers' evaluation has come to be known worldwide as a useful input to improve the quality of the teaching. These systems for evaluating teaching and course quality in medical education have long been established in the Western world but not used very effectively in our country.

Recently, there has been a growth of interest in this area from a range of different perspectives driven both internally by institutions themselves and externally by national quality initiatives.

While there are a large number of possible sources of feedback and evaluation data on teaching, the most common source of input for teaching evaluation is feedback from the students. In fact, student ratings is a necessary source of evidence of teaching effectiveness and obtaining student's feedback is a routine practice in most of the institutions.

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This study was undertaken with the aim to improve the quality of teaching by introducing students' feedback as a teachers' evaluation system and also contributing in the overall faculty development.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out on the effectiveness of student feedback for teachers' evaluation in a recently established medical college using fourth-semester students. A feedback form for the teacher's evaluation [Table 1] was developed and validated through peer review. It was then given to the undergraduate students during their mid fourth semester after getting clearance from the Ethical Committee. Teachers were also sensitized about the importance of students' feedback through a workshop before starting the study. Only those students having a minimum of 75% attendance were allowed to fill the proforma anonymously. A code name was assigned to each teacher (e.g. A, B, C…) depending on the number of teachers in the department to maintain the confidentiality. The students were made aware of the codes so that they can identify the teachers before filling the proforma .

Table 1: Students' feedback proforma

Department	_____
Code	_____
Semester	
Course	MBBS
Year	_____
Batch	_____

Rate each attribute of the teacher by rating 1-5 in the table according to your assessment of the teacher's performance on a five point scale given below. 5: Excellent; 4: Good; 3: Average; 2: Poor; 1: Very poor

Serial number	Attributes	Score A B C D E F G
1	Organization and preparedness of the classes	
2	Promptness in conducting classes	
3	Appropriate use of different teaching aids (ppt, chalkboard, etc.)	
4	Clarity in presentation	
5	Communicates effectively	
6	Recommends additional learning resources (books, journals, websites etc.)	
7	Provides timely feedback on student's performance	
8	Creates comfortable learning environment for the students	
9	Encourages extracurricular activities (cultural, sports, social activities)	
10	Provides assistance and counseling on the subject and is available for after class consultation	
11	Interact and encourages students to ask question/participation	
12	Maintains discipline in the class	
13	As a role model	

Teachers' code

The feedback was then analyzed by a two-member committee using the same codes without disclosing the identity of the teachers to them. After the analysis, the strength and weaknesses of the teachers were summarized and then the report was sealed within the envelope mentioning the code. This was handed over to the Medical Education Unit, which then gave the sealed envelope to the concerned teacher as per their code. This maintained the confidentiality and only the concerned teacher could know about his or her strengths and weaknesses. For 3 months, all the teachers were given equal opportunity to teach and interact with the students. Again after three months a questionnaire was given to both the students and faculty to assess any improvement in the teaching skills and its impact on the students.

Observations and Results

A total of 70 students having more than 75% attendance filled the feedback proforma. Most of the teachers as mentioned by the students were regular, prepared their class well, used adequate audio-visual aids, and communicated effectively. Most of them were approachable and also encouraged students to participate in various academic and extracurricular activities.

However, many of them were lacking in providing the regular feedback about their performance in the particular subject, and there was hardly any counseling regarding career goals and future plans. Only few of the teachers were good as a role model.

Faculty questionnaire
The questionnaire was given to the 15 teachers after they have been told about their performance. Twelve of them returned the complete questionnaire with their suggestions [Table 2]

Suggest any other method of teacher evaluation system
Eight (75%) teachers suggested self-evaluation, while only three teachers suggested peer evaluation as an alternative method. All 12 teachers suggested that it should be multisource feedback.

Other factor as mentioned by the teachers which may affect the student's feedback
Students residing in hostel may give different feedback from the day scholars (mentioned by 1 teacher).

Teachers looking after administrative posts tend to get a good feedback (mentioned by 2 teachers).

Recently taken lectures were usually given good feedback (mentioned by 3 teachers).

Number of lectures taken by each faculty is not equal especially when the feedback is taken mentioned by 2 teachers.

Student's questionnaire

All the seventy students who have filled the feedback proforma were given the questionnaire. Sixty-four students returned the questionnaire [Table 3].

Students mentioned the following points when asked for any other method of teacher evaluation system

- Evaluation by the administration. Mentioned by 3 students
- Feedback should not be taken. Mentioned by 7 students.

DISCUSSION

Teacher evaluation processes concentrate on the core activity of teaching covering areas such as planning and preparation, the classroom environment and instruction of teaching. The primary purpose of such feedback is to help the faculty to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and evaluation methods.[1-3]

Different ways of assessing teachers' effectiveness include student achievement measures, on-the-job evaluation, performance measures, and use of portfolios.[4] The method of students' feedback as an evaluation tool for teachers can be considered as one method of the on-the-job evaluation. Other common sources of information may be peers, administrators, and teachers self-evaluation.[5] Here, we have tried to know to know the effectiveness of students' feedback as an evaluation tool.

Peer evaluation, self-evaluation, and administrator observation have questionable reliability due to small number of raters. This is probably one of the important reasons which has led to the institutions using student evaluation of teaching.[6]

In general, students' evaluations of teaching have been found to be reliable. Research has shown that certain teacher variables (such as gender, age, teaching experience, personality, and research productivity), student variables (including gender, age, level, grade average, personality), course variables (class size, time of day of class), and administrative variables (time of module during the term) generally do not impact upon the evaluations given by students on teaching quality.[7] In our study, most of the teachers mentioned designation as an important variable affecting the students response. They have also mentioned that the allotment of number of lectures, topic, and the timing of lectures plays an important role

Table 2: Questionnaire regarding students feedback after knowing the feedback from the students on a 5-point Likert scale

Serial number	Statements	Number of faculty				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Students feedback is an effective tool for faculty development	0	10 (83.3)	2 (16.6)	0	0
2	In am satisfied with the present format of teaching evaluation system	0	7 (58.3)	3 (25)	2 (16.6)	0
3	Feedback should be taken after every semester	0	8 (66.6)	2 (16.6)	2 (16.6)	0
4	Feedback should be taken after the end of all three professional	0	0	0	8 (66.6)	4 (33.3)
5	Students do not fill the form seriously	0	8 (66.6)	2 (16.6)	2 (16.6)	0
6	Designation of the teacher influences the students response	0	6 (50)	3 (25)	3 (25)	0
7	Gender of the teacher influences the students response	0	0	2 (16.6)	10 (83.3)	0
8	A strict teacher may get poor response as compared to lenient teacher	4 (33.3)	7 (58.3)	1 (8.3)	0	0
9	Teacher evaluation system should not be used at all	0	0	0	3 (25)	9 (75)
10	Students feedback as a teacher evaluation system makes you uncomfortable	0	2 (16.6)	6 (50)	4 (33.3)	0
11	Teacher's evaluation system helped you to overcome your weaknesses	0	8 (66.6)	2 (16.6)	2 (16.6)	0
12	Evaluation system made you more aware toward students' need	4 (33.3)	8 (66.6)	0	0	0

Table 3: Questionnaire regarding students feedback as a faculty development tool on a 5-point Likert scale

Serial number	Statements	Number of students				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Students feedback enhance the overall performance of the teachers	4 (6.2)	48 (75)	4 (6.2)	8 (12.5)	0
2	It helped the teachers to improve their teaching skills	8 (12.5)	46 (71.8)	3 (4.6)	7 (10.9)	0
3	Feedback should be taken after every semester	0	53 (82.8)	1 (1.5)	10 (15.6)	0
4	Feedback should be taken after the end of all three professional	0	6 (9.3)	0	58 (90.6)	0
5	The feedback should be filled by all the batches	38 (59.3)	25 (39.0)	0	1 (1.5)	0
6	Designation of the teacher influences the students response	0	7 (10.9)	0	57 (89.0)	0
7	Students are not mature enough to judge the teachers	0	23 (35.9)	0	40 (62.5)	7 (10.9)
8	Teacher's performance has helped you in your learning in the class	0	52 (81.2)	8 (12.5)	4 (6.2)	0

in students' response. Literature exploring the validity of student evaluations found that this tend to correlate highly with lecturers' self-ratings, with the ratings of lecturers' colleagues and with students' actual grades.[7]

One of the key issues in the student evaluation of teacher is the question of how competent students are to make judgments on teaching and course quality. It should be remembered that students are not competent enough to evaluate teaching roles such as those involving course design (objectives, content, methods, and assessment), or grading practice in assessment. However, in terms of "the quality of the delivery of lecture or instruction," it is generally agreed that only students are in a position to provide a good feedback.[8] Although all the teachers agreed that students feedback made them more aware of the students, need and helped them to improve their skills but still feedback make them uncomfortable.

The limitation of this study is that it was done only on a single batch to know the effectiveness and acceptability of students' feedback as a teacher evaluation system in a new medical college. This now can be implemented to all the incoming batches as it will help the faculty to further improve their skills and academic performance ultimately leading to overall faculty development.

CONCLUSIONS

Students' feedback is an important and effective tool for the teacher's evaluation but other sources of feedback may also be utilized for the overall assessment of a teacher.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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